

# Good Shepherd

Serving Dinners at Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless – Men's Shelter



## Project Goal

To serve 160 to 400 people per month at the MCCH Men's Shelter. The group usually goes on the second Monday and fourth Wednesday and provides a hot and complete meal. Outreach. Have had active social ministry committee and this is one of the bigger projects of the Social Ministry Committee.

## Project Components

Hot meals, complete meal such as meatball stroganoff on brown rice, dinner rolls, homemade brownies and beverages.

## Planning

**One Week or More Before:** Sign up for your meal slot at [www.signupgenius.com](http://www.signupgenius.com) and select when you'd like to prepare or bring in food.

**Several Days Before:** Feel free to bring in your prepared foods and leave it in the freezer. Meals can be homemade or store bought. There is even prep and kitchen space at the church!

**The Day Of:** Serve the meal!

## How Many Volunteers?

There is a pool of about 150 volunteers, with about 40 to 60 involved in the dinner.

## Time Commitment

Service time is 6 to 7:30 at the shelter. Leave church together to carpool at about 5:30 or meet at the shelter. Prep time in church kitchen is 4-5:30.

## Expenses

Staff time of one person two to three hours per week, now that Sign Up Genius is in place and have a steady pool of volunteers. Everyone pays for own food donation. Now that she's done it for a while it's easier to do. Paper goods are already at shelters.

## Publicity

Publicity is done at the church in-house. A weekly newsletter comes out every week. Website is updated daily. Sign up Genius is on website. Mass email is sent out once a week (e-blast) to notify about what's going on with the church and Facebook page has photos and info. There are also announcement screens in the Sanctuary so people can see 'ads' for what is needed. And paper forms are available on-line.

## Challenges

To not get in a rut and be able to provide healthy alternatives for the meals for diabetics, vegetarians, or others with special food needs. To time things right and to have the right quantities of each food – online signup has been helpful.

## Results

Volunteers get a sense of satisfaction of making a difference even from something small like a donation of a gallon of milk. People get the opportunity to see homelessness up close. Homeless men are engaged with volunteers (and that is encouraged). Homeless men receive a nutritious and complete meal (leftovers are also left there). Enjoyment on part of church members for being a part of this outreach.

## Tips/Key Steps:

If serving meals twice a month, it can be helpful to have a trained food service manager who can oversee meal planning and selection and develop recipes. Improve comfort level of volunteers by encouraging them to take on manageable recipes that don't involve a huge amount of ingredients. Make sure food safety procedures are in place: wear prep gloves while preparing and serving.

## Points of Interest

- good community-building opportunity at church.
- Use Signup Genie at [www.signupgenius.com](http://www.signupgenius.com). It allows people to sign up, see what others are bringing and send reminders.

